



## EXHIBIT C

### TIPS FOR CONDUCTING A TOWN MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING

A town meeting can be used for the first of the two public hearings required under the CDBG program. The first hearing is designed to solicit public comment on community needs and priorities, including the needs of low and moderate income persons. The purpose of the first hearing is to solicit ideas on ways to deal with any community problems and to give citizens an opportunity to propose possible projects before the local officials make a decision regarding what types of projects they may apply for. The following ideas may help you plan a more effective town meeting (public hearing).

#### **Key Elements of a Successful Public Meeting or Hearing**

**PURPOSE:** There should be a good reason to meet. It might be gathering information about local needs, in general, or hearing public comment about a particular project.

**Notice:** For a successful meeting, people need to be notified. People need to know to come, why they should attend, and when and where to go.

- Use handbills, public notices in the newspaper or on the radio or cable TV, posters in grocery stores, laundromats and the post office, put notices in water bills, and send letters to community organizations and leaders to tell them why they should come, when, and where to go. Some communities and newspapers have their own website on the Internet that can be used for public meeting notices.
- The leaders of community organizations could be asked to announce the town meeting at their group's next meeting.
- For newspaper notices of the hearing, use a regular display ad with large block type instead of burying the notice in a legal advertisement that few people will look at.
- One Montana community used an innovative approach: members of the Needs Assessment Committee used the town's ambulance to drive through neighborhoods and invited citizens to their meeting over the ambulance loudspeaker.

**PREPARATION:** Arrangements must be made for a proper meeting place and time. Any necessary handouts or visual aids need to be prepared. Refreshments need to be arranged -- coffee and cookies always help.

- Some communities have offered a drawing for door prizes to encourage a better turn out.

- Try to avoid having your town meeting conflict with regularly scheduled meetings of other local organizations or other community activities such as athletic events.
- Make sure the facilities are adequate for the meeting, including size, seating, lighting, and depending upon the season, with sufficient heating or cooling . Arrange for a sound system or audio-visual equipment, if necessary.

**AGENDA:** An agenda must be prepared. Public meetings and hearings need clear and fair rules about the procedure to be followed. An agenda, especially one that is available to the public before the meeting, or that is passed out as people arrive, helps people prepare themselves to participate. By sticking to the agenda, the meeting organizers can run the meeting or hearing more efficiently, allow adequate time for public participation, and avoid confusion. A sample agenda is shown at the end of this exhibit.

**PARTICIPANTS:** Make sure the right people have been invited to the meeting and will be there.

**RESULTS:** Be sure to take time at the end of the meeting to reflect on the meeting and summarize what was accomplished or concluded.

**RECORDS:** A record of the meeting should be kept. For CDBG grant application purposes, a list of the time, place, participants, a summary of public comments, and the results of the meeting are adequate. For formal public hearings by a governing body or planning board, minutes may be required. Meeting organizers should have all participants sign in with names and addresses, particularly if they will attempt any follow up meetings or mailings.

✚     **The following is an example of an agenda for a town meeting:**

#### AGENDA

- I.        Welcome - Mayor/Commissioners (10 minutes)
  
- II.       Presentations by Community Needs Assessment Committee (30 minutes)  
  
           Individual committee members present their preliminary findings.
  
- III.      Small Group Discussion (see EXHIBIT A for a more detailed discussion of the Nominal Group Process.) Set a time limit that is long enough for the groups to think and discuss but short enough to conclude the meeting at a reasonable time, for example, 45 minutes.  
  
           Participants divide into small groups (not more than 6-8 people). While the small group process can be varied, one approach would be for members of each small group to write their individual ideas on paper. Feedback from each person then

follows, with each person's concerns being listed on a flip chart in full view; next, each idea is discussed for clarification and evaluation. Priorities are ordered by group voting; group discussion of the ballot results rounds out the process.

IV. General Discussion - spokesperson from each group presents list of issues, needs or priorities.)

1. Small group presentations (30 minutes)
2. General discussion to define overall issues/needs/priorities
3. Closure – allow enough time to summarize what has been done and consider what still needs to be accomplished.
  - ~ Review the results of the group process.
  - ~ Summarize points of general agreement.
  - ~ Outline a plan for further action.
  - ~ Summarize what has been accomplished.

(Make a record of the results for the CDBG application)

V. Closing and Thanks to Participants - Mayor/Commissioner (5 minutes)